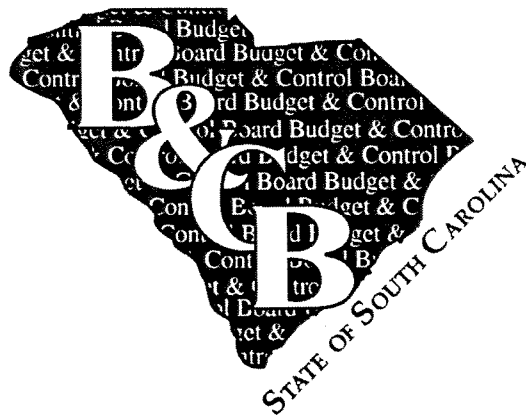


May 25, 2004

State Government News Summary



**Prepared by the Budget and Control Board
Office of the Executive Director**



Posted on Mon, May. 24, 2004

Sanford calls on voters to push his agenda

JENNIFER HOLLAND
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. - With a filibuster looming in the Senate to block a plan to reduce the state's income tax, Gov. Mark Sanford is worried a key piece of his legislative agenda will be scuttled before the General Assembly adjourns next week.

"There's a difference between debate and obstruction," said Sanford, who added that people are aware time is running out.

"It deserves as much debate as people want to put into it on the Senate side," he said. "What we would hate to see would be for people to filibuster and people never have the chance to go thumbs up or thumbs down."

Sanford jetted to Florence, North Charleston and Aiken on Monday to visit with small business owners, who the governor said would benefit from the plan, and urged them to contact their senators.

"I'd encourage anyone who cares about creating new jobs, attracting capital investment, growing small businesses and stimulating economic growth here in South Carolina to call their senators today and ask them to bring this important proposal to a vote," Sanford said.

The proposal moves the state's top income tax rate to 4.75 percent from 7 percent over several years. No break would be implemented in years when the state's revenues don't grow by 4 percent or more.

Critics have said the plan only benefits the top half of the state's income ladder.

Sen. Tommy Moore, D-Aiken, said he wants more explanation of the plan's economic impact.

"In a time when we can't or have chosen not to fund public education and Medicaid, then what does that mean as far as the general fund?" Moore asked. "But I'm certainly interested in listening."

The proposal won key support from Republican senators last week. Most of the Senate's 27 GOP members endorsed placing the Senate's version of the income tax reduction measure onto a bill that cleared the House.

The House heavily amended the bill with a variety of tax measures, but the Senate will take everything out and insert just the Senate's income tax plan.

Moore said it was interesting that Sanford has allowed his bill to take that the same course he adamantly opposed earlier this year. The governor threatened to sue the General Assembly over the issue of adding unrelated items to a bill called bobtailing,

"I guess bobtailing occurs only when you get to name the cat that has been bobtailed," Moore said.

Senators also have been upset the governor uses voters as pawns instead of talking with the lawmakers directly.

"It's the strongest of the available avenues to me," Sanford said.

The governor said he didn't view the bill's opposition as a personal attack.

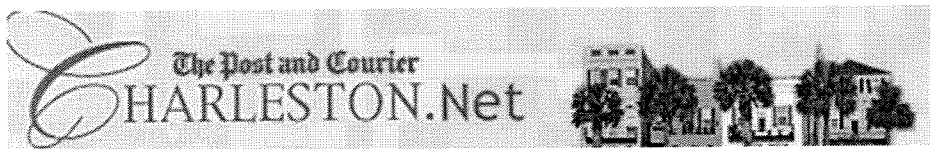
"If people want to oppose it that's their business," Sanford said.

Moore said he was concerned the bill was a political hot potato and doesn't want debate or a filibuster to block other bills

in the Senate.

"Is this issue to the demise of everything else?" he asked.

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Sanford pushes tax reduction plan on state trip

Governor says move would create jobs, help small businesses, boost economy

BY WARREN WISE

Of The Post and Courier Staff

Gov. Mark Sanford crisscrossed the state Monday to urge voters to call their state senators and ask them to vote today for his income tax reduction plan.

"It's do-or-die time for income tax relief," Sanford said at The Muhler Co. in North Charleston, part of a three-city swing to tout his job-creation plan before what could be this week's crucial vote in the state Senate. Lawmakers have two weeks left in this year's five-month legislative session.

Sanford wants lawmakers to pass his proposal to lower the state's income tax rate from 7 percent to 4.75 percent over 10 years, a move he said would stimulate the economy and create new jobs.

The state has lost more than 3,600 small businesses and more than 41,000 jobs in the past few years. Sanford said he believes slashing the tax rate would help small businesses that usually don't qualify for the tax cuts received by large industries.

The governor said 15 states that lowered income taxes have an 18.6 percent rate of job creation and a 34 percent spike in personal income while 10 states that raised incomes taxes saw a 6.8 percent rate of job growth and a 23.3 percent rise in personal income.

"We're currently at the 10-yard line looking to get this critical economic development bill across the goal line for thousands of small businesses across South Carolina," Sanford said. "That's why I'd encourage anyone who cares about creating new jobs, attracting capital investment, growing small businesses and stimulating economic growth here in South Carolina to call their senator and ask them to bring this important proposal to a vote."

The governor's proposal passed the House earlier this year and rests with the Senate, where bills are much harder to pass because one senator can block legislation.

"There's a point beyond where you are not deliberative. You are obstructionist," Sanford said. "It's very important (today) that obstructionism doesn't reign, that they are deliberative, they have the debate, a lengthy debate, maybe even a couple of days of debate, but at the end of the day, they are able to bring it to a vote so people can vote yes or they can vote no on this

income tax proposal."

Most Senate Republicans have signed onto the measure, but some said that Democrats will filibuster against the bill, effectively killing it in the waning days of the session.

Sen. Robert Ford, D-Charleston, said Democrats might support a different version of the bill.

"In its present form, all I see is somebody having somebody believing they are getting something when they are not," he said.

The tax plan would go into effect only after the state deficit is paid off and state growth hits 4 percent. The last time growth was that strong was 2000, though the state passed that mark in all but one year of the 1990s.

Henry Muhler Hay, president and owner of The Muhler Co., which started with two employees in 1991 and now has 70, supports the governor's proposal because his window company recruits employees from across the nation and one of the issues they ask about is the state's income tax rate.

"It's a nice place to live," Hay said, "but if you are eaten by taxes, it's not so nice."

Hay said he believes cutting the tax rate would allow his North Charleston company, which also sells sunrooms and shutters, to reinvest more money into the business and hire more employees.

The governor also stopped Monday in Florence and Aiken.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.charleston.net/stories/052504/sta_25sanford.shtml



Posted on Tue, May. 25, 2004

High-level official leaving S.C. Commerce Department

By C. GRANT JACKSON
Business Editor

High-level official leaving S.C. Commerce Department

Joe James, who was brought in after a national search last year to run the day-to-day operations of the S.C. Department of Commerce but reassigned after four months, will leave the department July 1.

In an e-mail memo to his staff Monday, Secretary Bob Faith said James "resigned to pursue other interests."

"Resigning to pursue other interests" is often corporate-speak for a forced resignation.

Faith said that James decided his highest and best use was someplace else and that he had some other things he wanted to pursue.

"What was working for the department wasn't working for Joe and his career aspirations," Faith said.

James said he would not cast stones at Commerce, which hired him in September 2003.

"I don't want to get too much into the things that went on there," James said. "Probably it was not the most perfect match in the world."

Faith called fair a characterization of James as very difficult and demanding to work for.

"Joe is a very talented guy with an enormous amount of experience," Faith said, "but the personalities have to mesh, and that ultimately wasn't the case. That is probably what led him to think he could find a better fit somewhere else."

James, 56, did not have a contract with the department and will receive no severance pay because he resigned, department spokesman Scott Derks said.

The highly touted Virginia economic developer joined Commerce to run its day-to-day operations. His salary was \$140,869 a year.

At the time, Faith hailed James as a great manager and a leader. "Joe James is a fine addition to the newly refocused Commerce team," Faith said. "South Carolina is lucky to have Joe here."

But in January, Faith moved James from day-to-day operations and made him the department's point person for the new S.C. Council on Competitiveness.

James kept the chief operating officer title, but his salary was cut to \$125,000. Faith hired Aiken businessman Tim Dangerfield as the new chief of staff.

In an announcing those changes, Faith said he was making sure "we have the right players in the right roles."

Cathy Novinger, executive director of the Palmetto Agribusiness Council, said she was distraught to hear that James was leaving Commerce.

He had been working with agribusiness in his role with the competitiveness council. She said agribusiness has never had anybody at Commerce who embraced the industry like James did.

"It was so refreshing to see someone step up and say, 'I recognize you are a viable industry, and I'm going to do what I can to help you bring value to that industry in South Carolina.' We had no problem working with him."

Other senior managers at the state agency will assume James' work with the competitiveness council, Faith said.

James said he hopes to remain in Columbia. "I am really bullish on South Carolina. It has great potential, and it is just beginning to realize what its potential is. "

Faith said he wants to do what he can to help James land somewhere in the state.

"I think that with the right fit someplace, he could be very, very valuable to somebody."

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Posted on Tue, May. 25, 2004

Panel considering hearing on S.C. prisons

By CLIF LeBLANC
Staff Writer

Delays in getting any critical information from the Corrections Department have reached the point that a legislative committee might request a public explanation from director Jon Ozmint, the committee chairman said Monday.

Sen. Mike Fair, R-Greenville, said he is frustrated that prison officials have not been providing important information, including an announcement last week of arrests in an ongoing criminal investigation.

An inmate was charged Thursday and his girlfriend a week earlier with smuggling in a gun used in April to shoot two inmates at Allendale Correctional Institution.

"What's at risk is credibility of people in leadership positions," said Fair, who chairs the Senate Corrections and Penology Committee. "That's what's on the line here."

Fair said he remains an Ozmint supporter and has not complained to Gov. Mark Sanford, who appointed Ozmint.

But Fair said he is considering a public hearing. "We're real close to becoming more aggressive."

Fair said he has talked to Ozmint, whom he describes as a friend. But improvements "are short-lived."

Ozmint could not be reached for comment Monday.

Friday, State Law Enforcement Division Chief Robert Stewart said he learned of the Allendale arrests well after they occurred. Later that day, prison officials placed an announcement on the agency Web site.

SLED joined the prison agency's investigation after Fair and another committee member called for an outside agency to investigate the April 18 shooting and the search for the missing gun.

"We should have been involved in the entire matter," Stewart said after learning of the arrests. "We're in the process of discussing proper procedure with Corrections."

Over the weekend, Ozmint disputed that SLED was unaware of the arrests.

Stewart said Friday he would meet this week with Ozmint. Monday, Stewart would not discuss any talks with Ozmint or the status of the investigation.

Arrest warrant information released Monday by prisons Inspector General Charles Sheppard shows details of the charges.

A sworn statement states that inmate Dean Ford, 29, arranged with his girlfriend, Jessica Monique Hanna, 29, to buy a gun for \$500 and arrange to sneak it into the Allendale prison. Ford was one of the inmates who was shot.

The statement does not identify the person who was to smuggle the gun inside the medium-security prison near Fairfax.

Monday, Sheppard declined to say whether more arrests had been made or to release additional information about what prison experts have called a major security breach.

Neither SLED nor the Corrections Department has said whether the gun has been found, but a monthlong prison lockdown has been lifted.



Posted on Tue, May. 25, 2004

Lighthouse transfer clears way

Ownership of Morris Island light to go to Budget and Control Board for easier restoration

The Associated Press

CHARLESTON — Transferring ownership of the Morris Island Lighthouse to the State Budget and Control Board should help resolve issues delaying the stabilization of the 128-year-old lighthouse washed by the waves of the Atlantic.

The lighthouse is now owned by the state Department of Natural Resources.

But transferring title to the Budget and Control Board will provide more flexibility in dealing with the federal government, which is helping pay for repair work, said state Sen. Glenn McConnell, R-Charleston.

The nonprofit group Save the Light Inc. has been raising money and working with the state and federal governments to strengthen the foundation of the 158-foot-tall brick lighthouse.

The group had hoped work would begin this spring.

But the Department of Natural Resources couldn't agree on liability issues with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is contributing \$1.7 million toward the \$2.6 million project.

A bill to transfer title to the Budget and Control Board should end the stalemate, McConnell said.

"All the parties have essentially checked off on it," he said. "This to me is a significant step forward. We have spent months trying to unjam this thing. Now we can see light at the end of the tunnel."

Ernie Passailaigue, chairman of Save the Light, said the issues of cost and liability can better be dealt with by the Budget and Control Board.

He said the five-member board meets year-round while the Department of Natural Resources had to clear major changes with state lawmakers who meet only five months a year.

The first phase of repair work involves putting a coffer dam around the light and creating a 200-foot-wide island of stones at its base.

Later, an additional \$550,000 will be spent to pour concrete inside the coffer dam, fill voids under the light and reconnect its base to its pilings.

Richard Beck, vice chairman of Save the Light, said the work could cost more than projected.

"It is the first time someone has ever done this, and yes, there are questions about it. But the people we have talked (to) about (it) in the marine contracting industry feel pretty confident about it," he said.

The light at the south end of Charleston Harbor stands in several feet of water at low tide. When built, it stood 1,200 feet from shore on high ground. But Morris Island eroded after the Charleston Harbor jetties were built in the late 19th century.

The light was abandoned in 1962 when a new light began operating on Sullivan's Island across the harbor.



Posted on Mon, May. 24, 2004

State gets \$7.1 million bioterrorism grant

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The state will get about \$7.1 million to prepare South Carolina hospitals to respond to bioterrorism attacks, infectious diseases and natural disasters, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced Monday.

The grant will go to improving emergency care for a health crisis at hospitals that would deal with a large numbers of casualties, the federal agency said.

"These grants are an important addition to national security because hospitals play such a critical role in identifying and responding to a terrorist attack or infectious disease outbreak," HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said.

The money is part of \$498 million in grants to hospitals throughout the country.

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Posted on Mon, May. 24, 2004

South Carolina gets grant to help crime victims

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The U.S. Department of Justice has awarded a \$4.1 million grant to the South Carolina Office of Victim Assistance, U.S. Sen. Ernest "Fritz" Hollings said Monday.

The office provides critical services to families as they heal from the physical, psychological, and emotional wounds of crime and violence, Hollings said. "This grant does much to ensure that victims of crime can receive compensation payments," Hollings said.

The grant provides funds to enhance South Carolina's victim compensation payments.

To date, the funds have always come from people convicted of federal crimes, not taxpayers.

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Posted on Tue, May. 25, 2004

Witness stresses need for education

Policy adviser says many students are not acquiring skills 'to be employable'

By ELLYDE ROKO
Staff Writer

MANNING — A minimally adequate education should provide students with the tools they need to become productive citizens, capable of earning a living and continuing to learn beyond high school graduation, a prominent education policy adviser and researcher testified Monday.

"I would say the purpose of public education — I've heard it all my life — is to give our young people the skills and knowledge and background to be employable, to not be on welfare, to not be in poverty," testified Terry Peterson.

Peterson, who served as an aide to former South Carolina Gov. Dick Riley and also worked with Riley when he was the U.S. secretary of education, is expected to be the final witness for the plaintiffs' side in the school funding trial being heard in Clarendon County.

Eight rural school districts are suing state government for additional money to underwrite what the state Supreme Court defined as a "minimally adequate education."

Students need that level of education, along with a high school diploma, as a bare minimum to compete in the evolving job market, Peterson said.

"There are very few jobs that require only a high school diploma, and that number is decreasing," he testified.

Workers without a high school diploma are more likely to be unemployed, more likely to live in poverty and more likely to earn low wages, he said.

Steve Morrison, an attorney representing the plaintiff districts, spent much of Monday afternoon drilling Peterson on what he thinks the opportunity for a "minimally adequate education" means.

That definition includes everything from proficiency in reading and writing English to knowledge of a foreign language, global events and different cultures, Peterson said.

When asked if students in the plaintiff districts had the opportunity to receive a minimally adequate education, based on scores on standardized tests administered by the state, Peterson responded: "Clearly, they are not."

In addition, he said, the achievement of some students does not mean each student has been provided that opportunity.

"Each child, each person has to have the chance to be a participant (in society). Public education is the fuel to make democracy and free enterprise work."

Peterson will continue his testimony today.

Reach Roko at (803) 771-8409 or eroko@thestate.com.



Posted on Tue, May. 25, 2004

Mother regains custody

By RICK BRUNDRETT
Staff Writer

The state's top court Monday sided mainly with a Dillon County mother in a bitterly fought custody dispute that led to statewide reforms for court-appointed guardians representing children in divorces.

The S.C. Supreme Court unanimously said Nalini Patel should get custody of her two youngest children, ages 11 and 13. The court, which included two acting justices, said her 17-year-old son could remain with his father, Anand Patel, in California.

The justices also said Nalini Patel was entitled to \$1,500 per month in alimony, \$1,150 per month in child support, and \$91,500 in retroactive alimony.

"I'm excited because the Patel saga after 10 years is finally over," Nalini Patel said Monday.

Anand Patel said Monday the high court's latest ruling was influenced by several Republican state senators, who he claimed contacted Chief Justice Jean Toal and wrote letters on Nalini Patel's behalf to Family Court Judge James Spruill. Toal didn't participate in Monday's ruling.

"This ruling that we got today was not the opinion of the Supreme Court," Anand Patel said Monday.

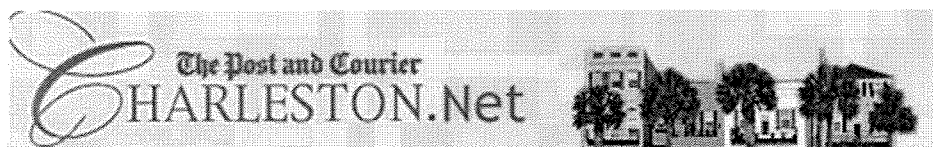
Nalini Patel lost custody of all three children in 1997 when she divorced her husband. Haskell Abbott of Conway, the family court judge in that decision, almost lost his judicial seat because of the case when he came up for re-election in 2002 in the state Legislature.

The case led to a 2001 state Supreme Court ruling that established guidelines for guardians representing children in private custody cases. Critics say guardians often are biased and incompetent and charge high fees.

Responding to parents' complaints, lawmakers passed a law, which took effect last year, regulating guardians.

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Republican foe using Kuhn clash as ammo

BY SCHUYLER KROPP
Of The Post and Courier Staff

State Sen. John Kuhn's recent verbal confrontation with first lady Jenny Sanford is being used against him by one of his Republican primary opponents.

On Monday, Senate District 43 challenger Henry Fishburne told a leading Republican women's group that the spat was part of a pattern of poor judgments Kuhn has shown in office.

"It was an uncomfortable and unfortunate incident," Fishburne said during a forum sponsored by the Charleston County Republican Women's Club.

Fishburne's comments came during a portion of the club's gathering where candidates traditionally introduce themselves to the audience, which numbered about 100 people Monday.

Fishburne went on to criticize Kuhn for filming a campaign television ad on the Senate floor, partially because Kuhn invokes Gov. Mark Sanford's name in the commercial. Sanford has been critical of Kuhn for not supporting his efforts to restructure state government.

"I think what John is saying here is that he is really anxious and desperate to be re-elected," said Fishburne, a Charleston city councilman.

Kuhn did not respond to Fishburne's attack. He delivered his introductory statement to the audience and immediately left for another appointment. Before leaving, he did say he supported Sanford in other parts of his agenda.

Fishburne also aimed barbs at the third candidate in the Senate District 43 race, former lawmaker Chip Campsen of the Isle of Palms.

Fishburne said Campsen is relying too much on his friendship with the governor and first lady and not enough on his own abilities in campaigning for the seat.

"I don't think that friendship is the basis for being elected as a state senator," said Fishburne, who may be the least known of the three candidates running for a district that covers parts of Charleston's coast and pushes inland to Berkeley County.

Campsen, like Kuhn, did not respond to Fishburne's charge.

The District 43 race grabbed headlines last week after it was revealed that Kuhn and Jenny Sanford had a verbal confrontation in the Statehouse over a \$1,000 contribution she gave Campsen, a long-time family friend and former aide to the governor. Both parties blamed the other for escalating tension during the encounter.

The Republican primary is June 8. With three candidates in the race, a runoff is possible if no candidate collects better than 50 percent of the vote in the first go-round.

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http://www.charleston.net/stories/052504/loc_25kuhn.shtml



Posted on Mon, May. 24, 2004

U.S. Senate candidates flood airwaves, mailboxes

JENNIFER HOLLAND
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. - With the primary just two weeks away, expect a deluge of campaign commercials starring the leading Republican U.S. Senate candidates.

David Beasley, Charlie Condon, Jim DeMint and Thomas Ravenel already have spent millions of dollars on ads talking about God, patriotism and jobs as they work to attract conservatives - the most active voters in Republican primaries.

They each plan to spend thousands more and launch several new ads before voters head to the polls June 8.

Beasley, a former governor who has the advantage of statewide name recognition, is considered to be the front-runner with the remaining candidates fighting for second place. If a candidate doesn't get at least 50 percent of the vote, the top two finishers will face off in a runoff election June 22.

But the candidates know anything can happen.

Even though the Washington-bound hopefuls have campaigned for months, political observers say voters still are trying to figure who the six candidates are and their differences. Myrtle Beach Mayor Mark McBride and Beaufort businesswoman Orly Benny Davis also are vying for the Republican nomination but do not have television ads.

Candidates face a tough time of year to draw attention with fewer people attuned to politics and families starting summer vacations.

"This is where their grassroots organizations need to get in gear," said Danielle Vinson, a political scientist at Furman University. "To get people to go out on a primary you really need personal contact. Television commercials don't generally motivate people to go out and vote."

Candidates have been crisscrossing the state for rallies and speaking events, while hundreds of volunteers are stuffing voters' mailboxes and ringing phones.

"As with any statewide campaign, you've got to reach the people," said Beasley's campaign spokesman Randy Page.

The race has been tame, but with two weeks left, things could get ugly.

"I expect Jim will take some hits," said DeMint's campaign manager Terry Sullivan. "I also expect us to be able to define ourselves differently."

DeMint, a three-term congressman from the Upstate, has worked to make his name and experience known outside his district. He's the only candidate who has run ads in all of the state's TV markets, including North Augusta and Rock Hill that sit along neighboring states.

"A lot of folks want to divide up the state either geographically, or by issue or how conservative," said Sullivan. "We don't want to divvy up the state and pit different parts of the state against each other, it's about ideas that are going to help all South Carolinians - rich, poor, Lowcountry, Upstate."

A new ad debuted Monday, but more are on the way. "We won't let people get tired of the ads," Sullivan said.

Condon, a former state attorney general, has touted his experience fighting crime. He plans to launch a new ad Tuesday.

Ravenel, a Charleston real estate developer, has saturated the airwaves explaining that he's not a career politician. He

plans to get more face time with voters next week as he travels the state in an RV.

"Everything is a media driven society now, so it is important for us to be in the media and out there," said Ravenel's campaign spokesman Mike Green.

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Posted on Tue, May. 25, 2004

Candidates spar over deficit

Five GOP Senate hopefuls talk tax cuts, budget at debate in Charleston

By AARON GOULD SHEININ
Staff Writer

CHARLESTON — Five of the six Republican candidates for U.S. Senate sparred Monday over taxes and deficits — and who is to blame for them — as the June 8 primary drew ever closer.

Former Gov. David Beasley of Society Hill, the front-runner, adopted the campaign theme of opponent Charlie Condon, declaring that discretionary spending by the GOP-controlled Congress and Republican president is out of control.

"It is hard to believe," Beasley told the Charleston County Republican Women's Club, that the GOP, which has claimed fiscal responsibility as a hallmark value, is overseeing "a half trillion-dollar budget deficit."

Beasley's proposed solution was to harken back to his days as governor, 1995-1999, when, he said, he fought for property tax cuts and tax incentives for new industry. He also called for the abolition of the federal death tax and the capital gains tax, saying the moves would spur the economy and grow tax revenues.

But U.S. Rep. Jim DeMint of Greenville cautioned his opponents not to blame President George Bush, with whom he has worked closely, or the Republican-led Congress, of which he is a member.

"We can't win this race for Senate talking down our president and this Congress," DeMint said. "We're moving this country in the right direction."

Charleston's Condon did not agree.

"I'm a member of the Republican Party, and I don't think having a robust debate is anything against the president," Condon said. "There's nothing here personally against the Republican Congress."

Condon noted the national debt is now \$7 trillion and "federal spending, on a per-household basis, is the largest it's been since the Second World War."

The problem is not just federal spending, said Charleston businessman Thomas Ravenel. He said the federal tax code is a disaster and is too complicated. He said it could be replaced by a national sales tax or a flat tax.

Government, Ravenel said, needs to be in the business of helping business, not bogging it down.

"(Ronald) Reagan transformed our government to one that got out of the way," he said.

Bluffton businesswoman Orly Benny Davis likewise said growing business is the key to improving the economy.

"It's important for us to make sure our business is easy to conduct," Davis said. At the same time, she said, government needs to "make sure we can afford what we spend."

There are more than 17,000 loopholes in the tax code, Davis said, and those should be closed.

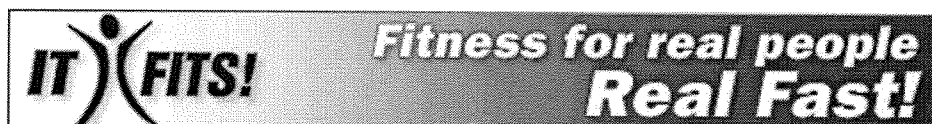
The sixth Republican candidate, Myrtle Beach Mayor Mark McBride, did not attend Monday's candidates' forum.

On the subject of health care, the candidates mostly agreed that curbing jury awards in malpractice cases is necessary to slowing the growth in health care costs.

Several candidates, including Ravenel and DeMint, said the recently approved Medicare prescription drug benefit is too expensive and should be scrapped.

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The Greenville News

Lawmakers approve naming highway after Hampton

Posted Monday, May 24, 2004 - 7:45 pm

By Laura Stokes
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Dale and Ann Hampton's daily drive home will soon serve as a reminder that their daughter Kimberly was not only a hero to them, but a hero to America as well.

e-mail this story

The South Carolina General Assembly has approved naming about a 10-mile stretch of State 88 from State 81 to U.S. 178 in northern Anderson County the Kimberly Hampton Memorial Highway.

"It's an honor to Kimberly for the sacrifice she made to our country, I've told her before that she was my hero," said Mr. Hampton. "I think it's quite a tribute to her and what she stood for and we're very grateful. It's an honor to her memory."

The 27-year-old Army captain was killed in January while piloting a helicopter in Iraq.

House District 10 Rep. Dan Cooper, R-Piedmont, who introduced the bill to name the road for Hampton, said she is deserving of such an honor.

"She's an outstanding young lady from all I've heard and she should be honored. She's somebody that deserves some recognition, he said. "She's certainly worthy of having a road named after her."

Cooper said as soon as the Department of Transportation makes and erects the sign, there will be a dedication ceremony.

Anderson County Council's District 6 Councilman Bill Dees had asked County Council to pass a resolution in support of renaming the road and the request was then sent on to Cooper who drafted the bill and saw it through.

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The Greenville News

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Weddings
City People
Nation/World
Technology
Weather
Communities
Entertainment
Classifieds
Coupons
Real estate
Jobs
Cars
Custom
Publications
Help

"I think it's very important to keep the heroes at the forefront of our minds," Dees said.

He said the sign will cost about \$200, and he is hoping Anderson County Council will cover the fee.

"I will take it out of my paving or recreation account if council will allow me to do that because I think it's something that is necessary," he said.

Dees said he will request the spending of the money from council at its June 1 meeting.



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Don't reduce state income tax without raising other taxes

THE SENATE FINANCE Committee greatly improved the governor's plan to cut the income tax, demanding a higher rate of revenue growth each year before the tax rate could be rolled back, and eliminating a provision that required the first cut next year.

So at least this revised proposal wouldn't cause the state to fall as much farther behind on funding essential services, and might even give us an opportunity to bring some of those services back up to a basic level.

But this is still a plan whose time has not come.

Gov. Mark Sanford says cutting the income tax rate is essential to attracting businesses to the state and encouraging South Carolinians to start and grow their own businesses. And we have no doubt that lower taxes would help with all of those things — as long as lower taxes don't result in our basic infrastructure crumbling. But it almost certainly will. Even if lowering the income tax would eventually generate enough economic activity to make up the difference in tax revenue, the effect would be delayed. And we're not confident that many people want to invest in a state that can't educate its children well enough to produce a competent workforce, that can't keep its prisons — and therefore its communities — safe and secure, that can't patch its potholes and improve dangerous roads and adequately police those roads.

The idea that South Carolinians are overtaxed is by no means fact. We pay, on average, a lower percentage of our income in taxes than people in 40 states; add in fees, and we still pay less than 19 states.

That's not to say that some taxes aren't too high. Clearly, some are. Just as clearly, some are too low.

The way you fix the problem — particularly when you are not collecting enough money to pay for basic services — is not by lowering an individual tax. It's by lowering some taxes while raising others; in other words, overhauling the tax system.

Such a comprehensive approach also allows for more complicated changes than simply raising or lowering tax rates. And that might be what is needed with the income tax, which looks much higher than it actually is.

While our income tax rate is among the highest in the nation, our effective tax rate — the percentage of our incomes that we pay in taxes — ranks somewhere between the middle and the bottom nationally, depending on how you do the calculations. This is because we have so many exemptions, credits and deductions. If the goal is to convince outsiders to take a serious look at South Carolina rather than simply marking us off the list because we seem to have such high income taxes, we might be better off eliminating enough of those exemptions that we can lower the rate, and still bring in the same amount of money.

This state desperately needs an overhaul of our tax code — and some sort of change in the income tax should be part of that overhaul. But it should only be part of it. Until the Legislature is willing to do the entire job, it needs to stop tinkering around the edges. That's a recipe for bad policy that damages our state.